

# WHAT TO KNOW IF YOUR DOCTOR SUSPECTS MICROCEPHALY DURING PREGNANCY

If your doctor has told you that your developing baby may have microcephaly or other health conditions related to Zika infection during pregnancy, you and your family may feel overwhelmed, worried, and unsure of what to do next. Read on to learn more about these conditions and find out where you can go for help during pregnancy.

## How Might Zika Affect My Baby?

Zika infection during pregnancy can lead to a pattern of conditions, called congenital Zika syndrome, in the baby. A baby with congenital Zika syndrome, might have one or more of the conditions in the yellow box.

- Smaller than expected head size, called microcephaly
- Problems with brain development
- Feeding problems, such as difficulty swallowing
- Hearing loss
- Seizures
- Vision problems
- Decreased joint movement, called contractures
- Stiff muscles, making it difficult to move

We are still learning about the effects of Zika infection during pregnancy. Some of the conditions listed in the yellow box can lead to problems with a child's progress in moving, learning, speaking and playing, called "developmental delay." Babies with congenital Zika syndrome may experience different outcomes as they develop, but it's difficult to know how each baby will be affected. These answers may only come with more time. It is important for you to work with your doctors to manage your baby's medical care together.



## How Will I Know How My Baby is Doing During Pregnancy?

- During pregnancy, your healthcare provider will have regular follow-up appointments with you to track how you are doing and how your baby is growing.
- Your healthcare provider may order extra ultrasound tests to check your developing baby's growth.
- It is important to know that ultrasounds can show some, but not all, problems with development during pregnancy. Microcephaly can sometimes be seen on the 18-20 week ultrasound, but is more commonly detected later in the second trimester or early in the third trimester.
- Your healthcare provider may offer you an amniocentesis between 15 -18 weeks of pregnancy. Amniocentesis is a test where the doctor collects a small amount of amniotic fluid from the area surrounding the developing baby. The fluid is then tested to look for Zika genetic material, called RNA.
- Your healthcare provider might order testing to see if you've been infected with Zika virus. Microcephaly can be caused by other exposures, such as certain infections or harmful substances (e.g., alcohol).
- Your healthcare provider may refer you to a doctor who specializes in high-risk pregnancies for close monitoring and care during pregnancy.



**Centers for Disease  
Control and Prevention**  
National Center on Birth Defects  
and Developmental Disabilities

## How Will I Know How My Baby is Doing After Pregnancy?

After birth, your baby's healthcare provider will perform

- A physical exam of your baby, including a measure of your baby's head size
- A hearing screening
- More exams and tests as needed

## Where to Find Resources and Support During Pregnancy

If you are expecting a baby with microcephaly or other health conditions related to Zika infection during pregnancy, you may be worried and unsure of next steps. Before the baby is born, it may be helpful to learn more information about Zika and pregnancy, talk with your doctors and other specialists, and stay connected with family, friends, and support groups. Building a support system early may help once your baby is born.



### FIND more information through:

- Your baby's regular doctor or a specialist whom your doctor recommends
- **Early Intervention Services** | [www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/parents/states.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/parents/states.html)
- **CDC Zika Virus Website** | [www.cdc.gov/zika](http://www.cdc.gov/zika)
- **The Parent Training and Information Center** in your state | [www.parentcenterhub.org/find-your-center](http://www.parentcenterhub.org/find-your-center)
- Non-profit organizations
  - » **American Academy of Pediatrics** | Visit website: [www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org)
  - » **American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists** [www.acog.org/Patients](http://www.acog.org/Patients)
  - » **March of Dimes**: [www.marchofdimes.org](http://www.marchofdimes.org) | Ask questions: [www.marchofdimes.org/ask-us.aspx](http://www.marchofdimes.org/ask-us.aspx)
  - » **Mother-to-Baby** Call 1-866-626-6847 Monday - Friday from 8am - 5pm (local time). Chat live or send an email through the MotherToBaby website: [www.mothers-to-baby.org](http://www.mothers-to-baby.org)



### ACCESS regular prenatal and other health care through:

- Your regular doctor
- A specialist whom your doctor recommends. Babies with microcephaly might benefit from seeing other healthcare providers who specialize in certain types of care, like treating disorders of the nervous system, eye problems, or child development.



### GET support from families of children with microcephaly or other special healthcare needs through:

- Non-profit organizations
  - » **The Family Voices** affiliate or **Family-to-Family Health Information Center** in your state | Visit website: [www.familyvoices.org/affiliates](http://www.familyvoices.org/affiliates)
  - » **Parent to Parent-USA** | Visit website: [www.p2pusa.org](http://www.p2pusa.org)
  - » **Partnerships for Parents** | Visit website: [partnershipforparents.net/](http://partnershipforparents.net/)
- Your hospital social worker. Try talking to someone about how you're feeling, be it friend or professional. Hospitals often have a social worker who can counsel you initially and connect you with additional therapeutic resources. Get the support you need to take care of yourself and your baby.

For a more complete list of resources for families, please visit [www.cdc.gov/pregnancy/zika/family/links.html](http://www.cdc.gov/pregnancy/zika/family/links.html)

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